

Ancient Egypt and Nubia

Chapter Preview

This chapter will introduce you to the civilizations of Ancient Egypt and Nubia.

Section 1

The Geography of the Nile

Section 2

The Rulers of Egypt

Section 3

Egyptian Religion

Section 4

Ancient Egyptian Culture

Section 5

The Cultures of Nubia



Target Reading Skill

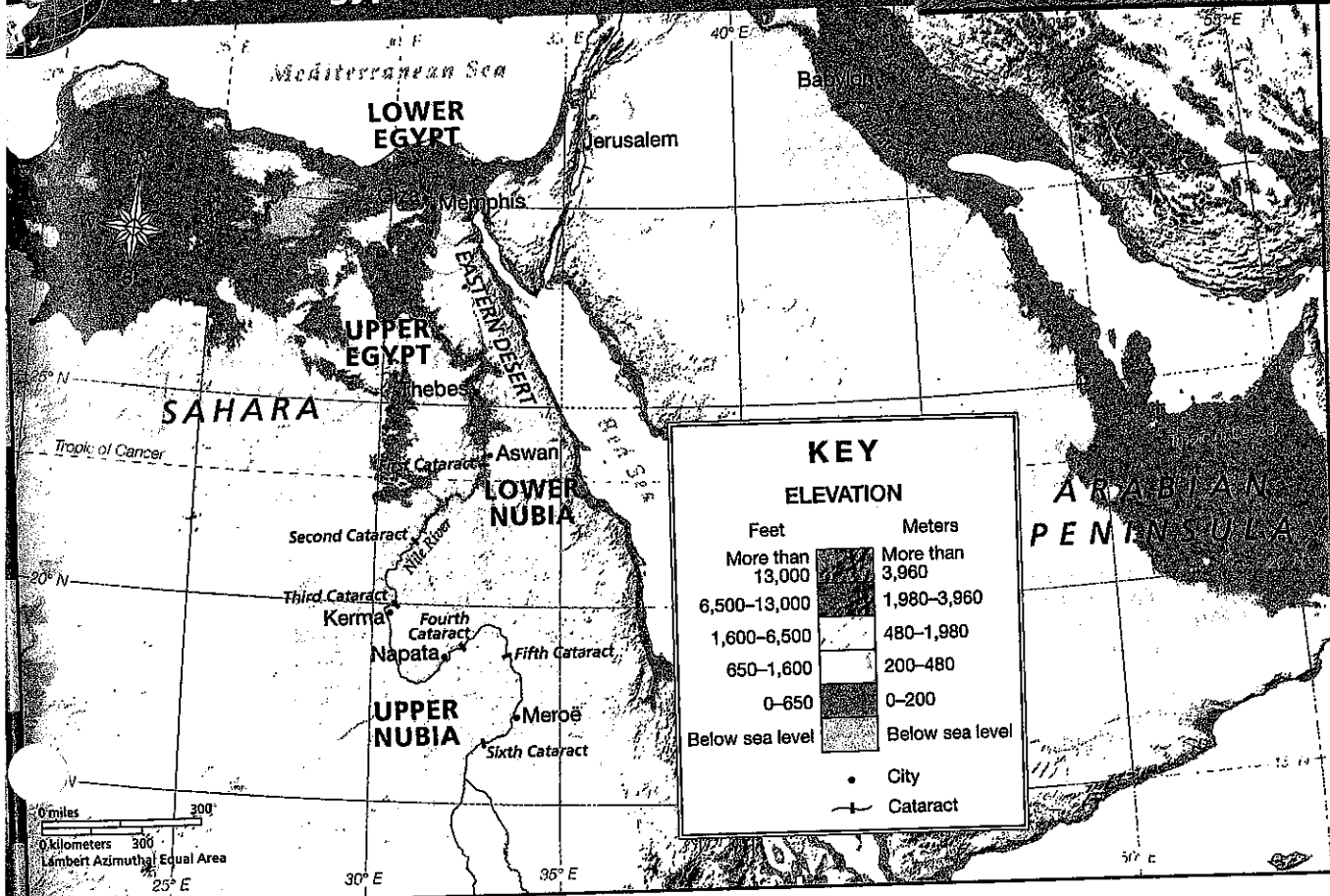
Context In this chapter you will focus on using context to help you understand unfamiliar words. The context of a word includes the words, phrases, and sentences surrounding the word.

► A tomb painting of Egyptian fishermen, dating from about 1292 to 1225 B.C.



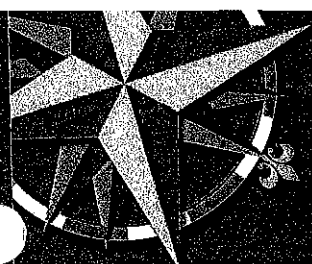
Ancient Egypt and Nubia

MAP MASTER™ Skills Activity



Location The waters of the Nile River flow through Nubia and Egypt and spill into the Mediterranean Sea. **Use a Compass Rose** In which direction does the Nile River flow? **Draw Conclusions** Use the map key to support this statement: Water always flows downhill.

Go Online
PHSchool.com Use Web Code
lbp-2311 for step-by-step
map skills practice.



The Geography of the Nile

Prepare to Read

Objectives

In this section you will

1. Find out how the geography of the Nile changes as the river runs its course.
2. Learn about the types of communities that first appeared along the Nile, and how the Nile was used for trade.

Taking Notes

As you read, note the effects the Nile had on the growth of communities and trade. Copy the chart below, and use it to record your findings.

The Nile River		
Geography	Communities	Trade
• • •	• • •	• • •

Target Reading Skill

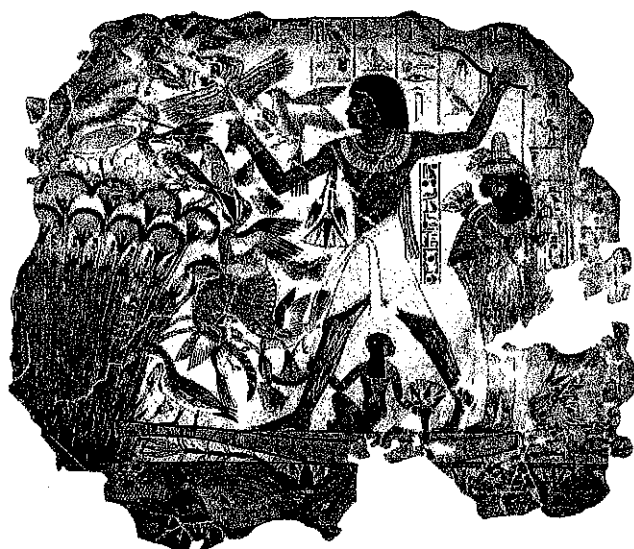
Use Context Clues When reading, you may come across an unfamiliar word, or a word that is used in an unfamiliar way. Look for clues in the context—the surrounding words, sentences, and paragraphs—to help you understand the meaning. Look at the context for the word *sediment* on page 70. in the paragraph that begins with The Gifts of the Nile. What do you think *sediment* means?

Key Terms

- **Nubia** (NOO bee uh) *n.* an ancient region in the Nile River Valley, on the site of present-day southern Egypt and northern Sudan
- **cataract** (KAT uh rakt) *n.* a large waterfall; any strong flood or rush of water
- **delta** (DEL tuh) *n.* a plain at the mouth of a river, formed when sediment is deposited by flowing water
- **silt** (silt) *n.* fine soil found on river bottoms

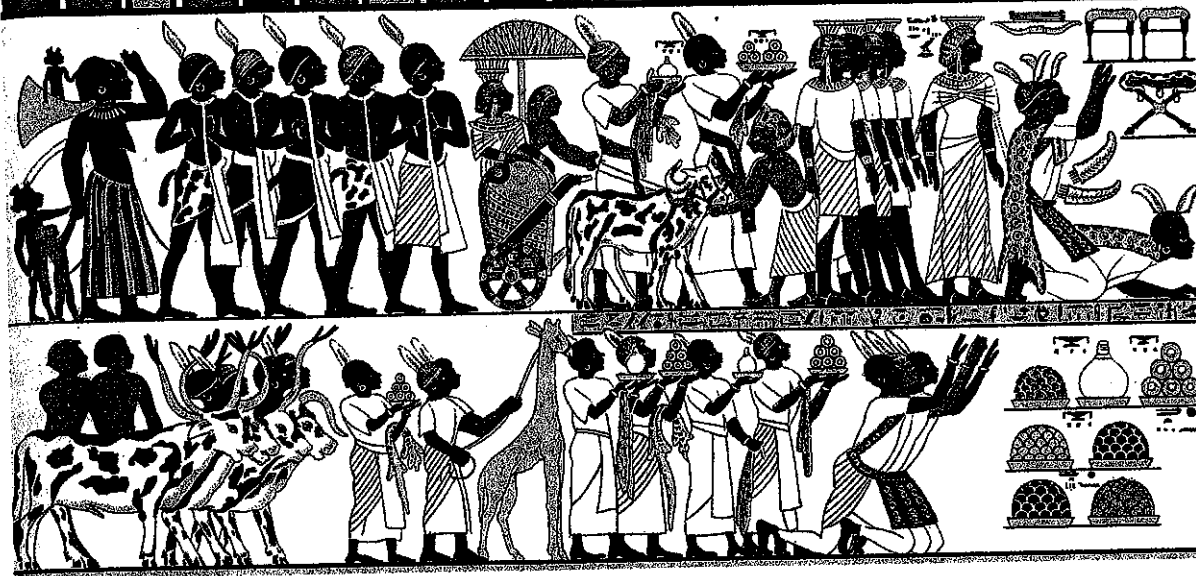
The Greek historian Herodotus (huh RAHD uh tus) wrote, “Egypt is the gift of the Nile.” Herodotus explored Egypt in the 400s B.C. On his journey, he saw the life-giving waters of its great river. He traveled upriver until he was stopped by churning rapids of white water. Forced to turn back, he never found the source of the river.

Herodotus wrote down his observations of Egypt and other lands. His writings still make interesting reading today. Despite his failure to locate the source of the Nile, Herodotus had learned a basic truth: There would be no Egypt without the Nile.



River of Life

An Egyptian uses a throwstick, a sort of boomerang, to hunt for birds from his boat. **Analyze Images** What gifts of the Nile are shown in this painting?



Nubia's Resources

Nubian princes bring gifts of gold to an Egyptian ruler. **Infer** How did geography help link the cultures of Egypt and Nubia?

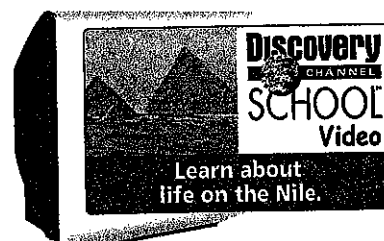
The Course of the Nile River

The Nile River is the world's longest river. It flows north from its sources in East Africa to the Mediterranean Sea for more than 4,000 miles (6,400 kilometers). That is about the distance from New York to Alaska. The Nile has two main sources. The Blue Nile rises in the highlands of the present-day country of Ethiopia and races down to the desert in thundering torrents. The White Nile is calmer. It begins deep in East Africa and flows northward through swamps. The two rivers meet in the present-day country of Sudan. There, the Nile begins its journey through desert lands to the Mediterranean Sea.

The Nile Through Ancient Nubia Just north of the point where the Blue Nile and White Nile meet, the Nile makes two huge bends. It forms an S shape 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometers) in length. The northern tip of the S is at the city of Aswan in Egypt. Along this stretch of the Nile was Nubia, an ancient region in the Nile River valley.

The Nubian section of the Nile contained six cataracts, or rock-filled rapids. Between the first and second cataracts was Lower Nubia. In that region, the desert and granite mountains lined the riverbanks, leaving very little land for farming. Because it rarely rained in Lower Nubia, people had to live close to the Nile for their water supply.

Farther south, between the second and sixth cataracts, lies the area that was known as Upper Nubia. In that region, rain does fall, so people could plant in the fall and then harvest in the spring. But the farmland was in a very narrow strip, no more than 2 miles (3 kilometers) wide on each side of the river.





Using Context Clues

In the paragraph at the right, sediment is described as being mineral rich and carried by water. If you read ahead, you will learn that silt is a kind of sediment. What is the meaning of *sediment*?

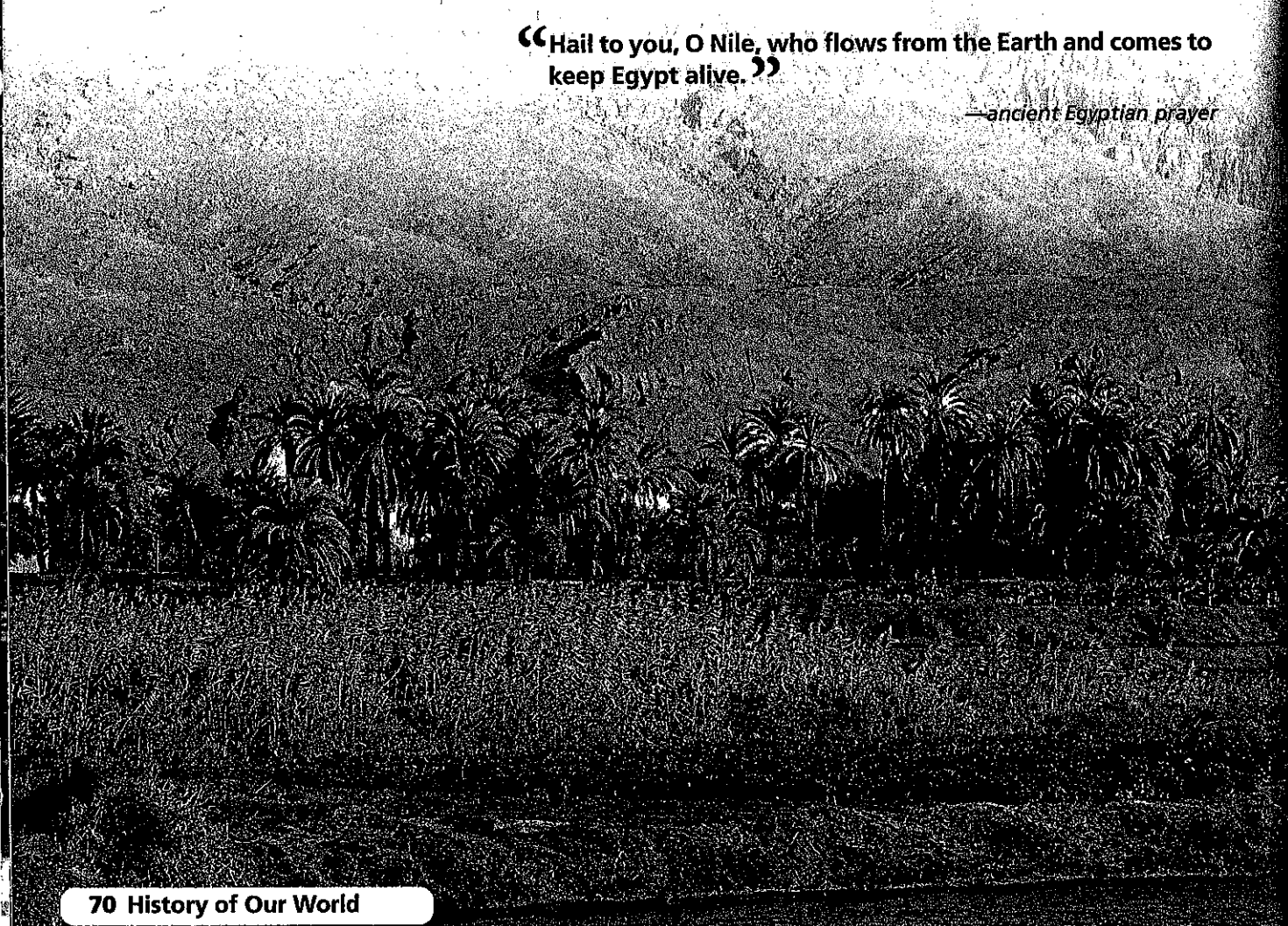
The Nile Through Ancient Egypt The Nile ran for about 700 miles (1,100 kilometers) through ancient Egypt, from the First Cataract at Aswan to the Mediterranean Sea. On its way, it passed through a narrow region called Upper Egypt. This fertile strip had an average width of around 6 miles (10 kilometers) on each side of the river. In the north, the Nile spread out to form a fertile, marshy area called Lower Egypt. Deserts stretched on each side of the river's green banks.

At the end of the Nile in the north, the river split into several streams that flowed to the Mediterranean Sea. These streams formed an area called the delta. A **delta** is a plain at the mouth of a river. The flowing water deposited mineral-rich sediment. Because of this, the Nile delta contained very fertile farmland.

The Gifts of the Nile Every spring, far away in the highlands of Africa, waters began to rush downstream. As they flowed, they brought a rich, fertile sediment called silt. Silt is fine soil found on river bottoms. By late summer, the Nile spilled over its banks all the way to the delta. The floodwaters deposited a thick layer of silt, making the land ideal for farming. In gratitude, the Egyptians praised Hapi (HAH pea), the god of the Nile:

“Hail to you, O Nile, who flows from the Earth and comes to keep Egypt alive.”

—ancient Egyptian prayer



Black Land and Red Land The ancient Egyptians called their land Kemet (KEH met), “the black land,” because of the dark soil left by the Nile’s floods. The timing of the floods and the height of the floodwaters might vary from year to year. But unlike the Mesopotamians, the Egyptians usually did not have to worry about flash floods. Dry years were rare in Egypt, but they could cause famine.

Beyond the fertile river banks lay the “red land,” the vast desert. It spread out on either side of the river. Most of the Sahara lay to the west, and the part of the Sahara called the Eastern Desert lay to the east. These lands were not friendly to human life. They were useless for farming. Only those who knew the deserts well dared travel over this blistering-hot land.

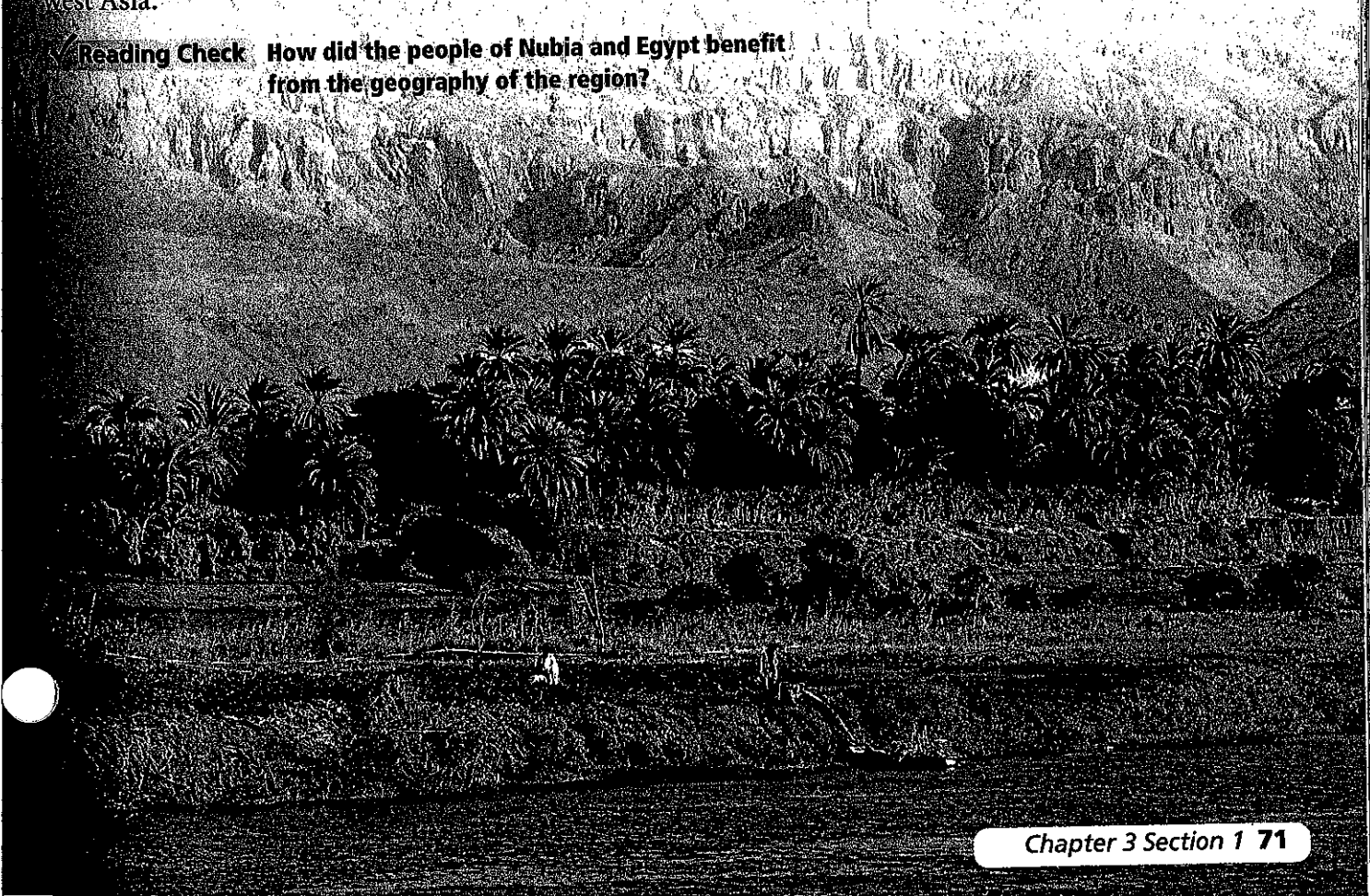
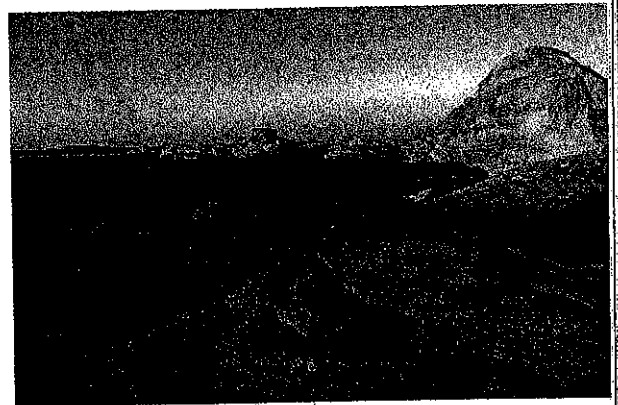
Desert Protection The hot sands shielded Egypt and Nubia from foreign attacks. That was a protection Mesopotamia did not have. The land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers was wide open to outsiders. The people of Mesopotamia often faced invasions. Over a period of 2,000 years, the people of ancient Egypt and Nubia faced few invasions. Yet they were not isolated. The Nile valley provided a path for trade with Central Africa. The Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea provided access to Southwest Asia.

Reading Check How did the people of Nubia and Egypt benefit from the geography of the region?

Geography and Civilization

In the large photo below, you can see the date palms and fields that line the Nile River near the city of Luxor. The small photo shows the desert landscape that surrounds the Nile.

Analyze Images Compare the two photos. What are the challenges of living in the desert? What are the advantages of living along the Nile?



The Growth of Communities and Trade Along the Nile

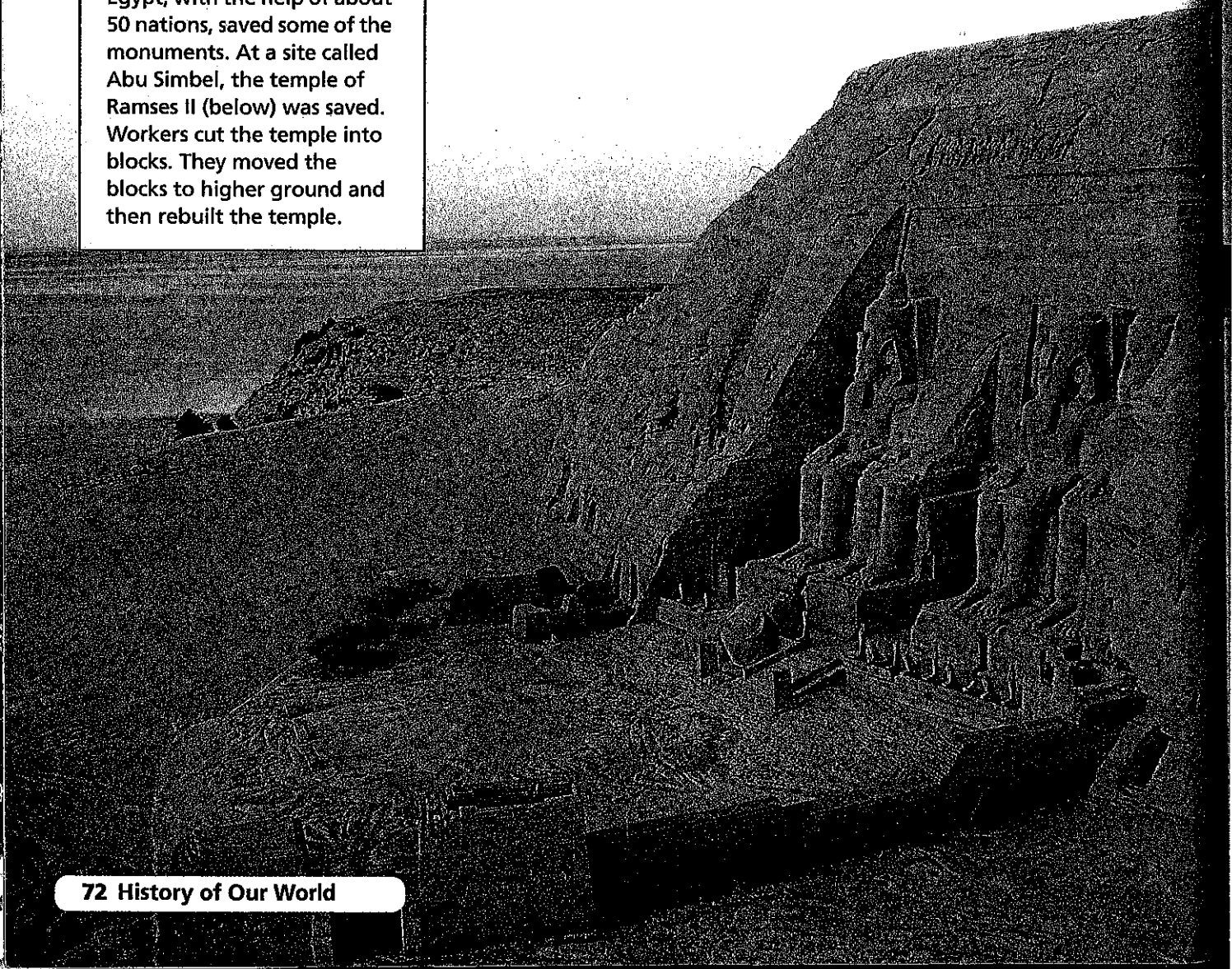
Settled hunting and fishing communities may have appeared in Nubia around 6000 B.C. Unlike the communities of the Fertile Crescent that settled after taking up agriculture, the Nubians formed settlements before they began to farm. Settled farming communities began to appear in both Egypt and Nubia sometime around 5000 B.C. As these communities grew, trade also expanded.

Links Across Time

Saving Monuments To control flooding, the Egyptians built the Aswan High Dam on the Nile River in the 1960s. The water held back by the dam created Lake Nasser. During its creation, Lake Nasser threatened to flood ancient monuments that had been carved in the cliffs above the Nubian Nile. Egypt, with the help of about 50 nations, saved some of the monuments. At a site called Abu Simbel, the temple of Ramses II (below) was saved. Workers cut the temple into blocks. They moved the blocks to higher ground and then rebuilt the temple.

Living Along the Nile Egypt's early farming communities settled in the delta and valley regions of the Nile. The people of the delta built villages around the fertile river beds. Their homes were built of straw or of bricks made from a mix of mud and straw. To the south, in Upper Egypt, people built scattered farming villages along the banks of the Nile.

Nubia had less farmland along the Nile than Egypt. Because of the shortage of farmland, Nubians added to their diet by fishing in the Nile and hunting ducks and other birds along its banks.

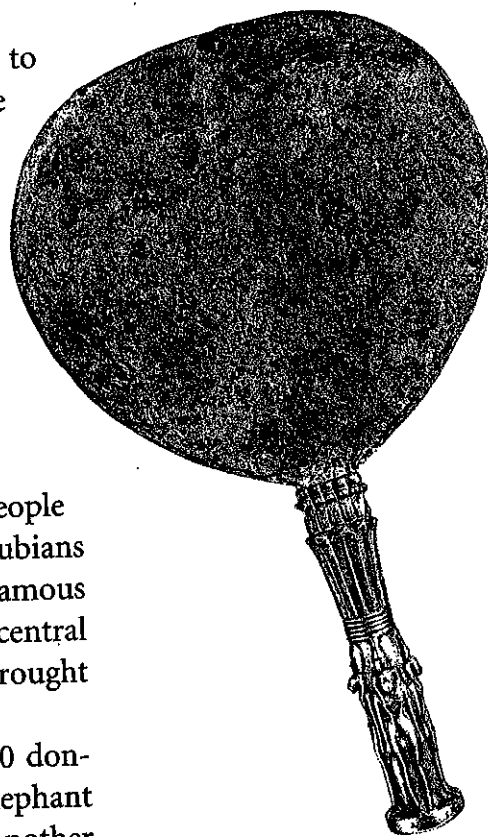


A Highway for Trade In Egypt, the Nile was used to transport goods. Ships could travel north on the Nile because it was moving downriver. But they could also sail upriver with the help of the winds that blew toward the south. Other trade links ran east across the desert to the Red Sea ports or to Mesopotamia. Caravans loaded with gold, silver, copper, and fine pottery traveled the overland trade routes. Valuable goods such as cedar from the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea and gold from Nubia were sold in the bazaars of Egypt's towns.

Routes Through Nubia Because of the cataracts, people could not travel through Nubia by river. Instead, the Nubians developed trade routes over land. The Nubians became famous traders of the ancient world. They carried goods from central Africa and Nubia into Egypt and southwestern Asia and brought other goods back.

One Nubian caravan that traveled into Egypt had 300 donkeys. The donkeys carried ebony wood, ivory from elephant tusks, ostrich feathers and eggs, and panther skins. Another popular object was a throwstick, a type of boomerang that Africans used for hunting.

✓ Reading Check How did the Nile operate as a "highway for trade"?



Nubians traded many valuable goods. This Nubian bronze mirror with a gilt silver handle, from about 700 B.C., was found in present-day Sudan.

Section 1 Assessment

Key Terms

Review the key terms at the beginning of this section. Use each term in a sentence that explains its meaning.

Target Reading Skill

Find the word *torrents* on page 69. Use context clues to find the meaning of *torrents*.

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

1. (a) **Recall** Describe the course of the Nile River from its source all the way to the delta.

(b) Identify Cause and Effect

How did the Nile River affect the lives of the early Egyptians and Nubians?

(c) **Predict** If the Nile did not flood regularly, how might life along the river have been different in ancient times?

2. (a) **List** What kinds of trade goods passed through Nubia on their way to Egypt?

(b) **Identify Effects** How did the cataracts of the Nile River affect Nubian trade?

(c) **Draw Conclusions** How did the Nubians become famous as traders?

Writing Activity

Suppose that you are traveling along the Nile from its source to the Nile delta. Write a journal entry about the changes you notice in the river as you travel.

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For: An activity on the Nile River
Visit: PHSchool.com
Web Code: lbd-2301